

Amendments to the claims:

This listing of the claims will replace, without prejudice, all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

39. (Withdrawn) An apparatus for the continuous wet granulation of a powder material, consisting essentially of:

- a barrel having a granulation chamber provided between a first part (B) and a second part (B') of said barrel, the first part (B) being provided with at least one first inlet (1) connected with said granulation chamber for receiving said powder material and for supplying it to said granulation chamber and with at least one second inlet (2) connected with said granulation chamber for receiving a granulating liquid and for supplying it to said granulation chamber, said granulation chamber having an aperture (9) for discharge of granules from said barrel, and
- at least one continuously operated transporting means (S) provided in said granulation chamber for advancing said powder material toward the end of said granulation chamber while granulating said powder material with the aid of said granulating liquid, each said transporting means (S) comprising at least a first transport zone (4) at its rear end and optionally one or more additional transport zones (6), an agglomeration zone (5) downstream from the first transport zone (4) and optionally one or more additional agglomeration zones (7), and a second transport zone (8) at its front end, each agglomeration zone (5, 7) being positioned between two transport zones (4, 6, 8), said at least one first inlet (1) and said at least one second inlet (2) of the barrel being positioned above the at least one first transport zone (4) of each said at least one transporting means (S),

wherein said aperture (9) has a shape tightly fitting the terminal portion of said at least one transporting means (S) for directly discharging said granules from the granulation chamber without developing a pressure gradient at the exit of the granulation chamber.

40. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said transporting means (S) is a twin screw.
41. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said transporting means (S) is a twin screw and the length to diameter ratio of each screw is within a range from about 15 to about 60.
42. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein the cumulative lengths of the agglomeration zones (5, 7) represent from about 8% to about 30% of the length of the transporting means (S).
43. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein the respective dimensions of the first inlet (1) for receiving the powder material and of the second inlet (2) for receiving the granulation liquid are such that the weight ratio of the granulating liquid to the powder material is not above 16:100.
44. (Withdrawn) The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein the respective dimensions of the first inlet (1) for receiving the powder material and of the second inlet (2) for receiving the granulation liquid are such that the weight ratio of the granulating liquid to the powder material is not above 2:100.

45. (Currently amended) A process for the continuous wet granulation of a powder material, comprising the steps of:

- (a) feeding a powder material to a first transport zone (4) of at least one continuously operated transporting means,
- (b) feeding a granulating liquid to said first transport zone (4) of said at least one continuously operated transporting means,
- (c) continuously advancing said powder material and said granulating liquid from said first transport zone (4) to an agglomeration zone (5) of said at least one continuously operated transporting means downstream of said first transport zone (4) for agglomerating said wet powder material,
- (d) transporting said agglomerated material from said agglomeration zone (5) to a second transport zone (8) of said at least one continuously operated transporting means downstream of said agglomeration zone (5) for producing granules, said second transport zone (8) having an aperture (9) positioned collinearly to said continuously operating transport system, and
- (e) directly discharging said granules from said second transport zone (8) through said aperture (9) of said ~~at least one continuously operated transporting means without submitting said granules to any pressure gradient~~.

46. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, further comprising the step of continuously advancing said agglomerated material from said agglomeration zone (5) to said second transport zone (8) of said at least one continuously operated transporting means through one or more combinations of an additional intermediate transport zone (6) followed by an additional intermediate agglomeration zone (7).

47. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said at least one continuously operated transporting means is a twin screw.
48. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein the residence time of said powder material in said at least one continuously operated transporting means is in the range of ~~about~~ 5 seconds to ~~about~~ 180 seconds.
49. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said powder material contains a biologically-active ingredient.
50. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said powder material contains from 0.1% by weight to 99% by weight of a biologically-active ingredient.
51. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said powder material contains a poorly soluble drug ~~belonging to Class II or Class IV of the Biopharmaceutical Classification System.~~
52. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said powder material is selected from foodstuffs, catalysts, ~~chemicals,~~ fertilizers, detergents and mineral ores.
53. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein the amount of the said granulating liquid is from ~~about~~ 2% to ~~about~~ 16% by weight of the powder material.

54. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, being carried out at a temperature within a range from ~~about~~ 10°C to ~~about~~ 50°C.
55. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, further comprising a granule drying step (f) subsequent to discharging step (e).
56. (Previously amended) The continuous wet granulation process according claim 45, further comprising a granule dry milling step subsequent to discharging step (e).
57. (Currently amended) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45 49, wherein said powder material further contains one or more physiologically acceptable excipients.
58. (Cancelled)
59. (Cancelled)
60. (Previously presented) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein said process avoids the use of a die, die block, die plate, die screen or any other similar device having the function or result of forcing the granulate to produce an extrudate of a required section by creating a specific pressure gradient in the terminal portion of said continuously operated transporting means.

61. (Previously presented) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 45, wherein the process further comprises a step wherein granules of (e) are used to make tablets, effervescent granules, sachets, or filling hard capsules.
62. (Previously presented) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 55, wherein the process further comprises a step wherein the granules of (f) are used to make tablets, effervescent granules, sachets, or filling hard capsules.
63. (Previously presented) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 61, wherein said granules are used to make tablets.
64. (Previously presented) The continuous wet granulation process according to claim 62, wherein said granules are used to make tablets.
65. (Cancelled)